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19 April 1965

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
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1. Vietnam: Current situation report.

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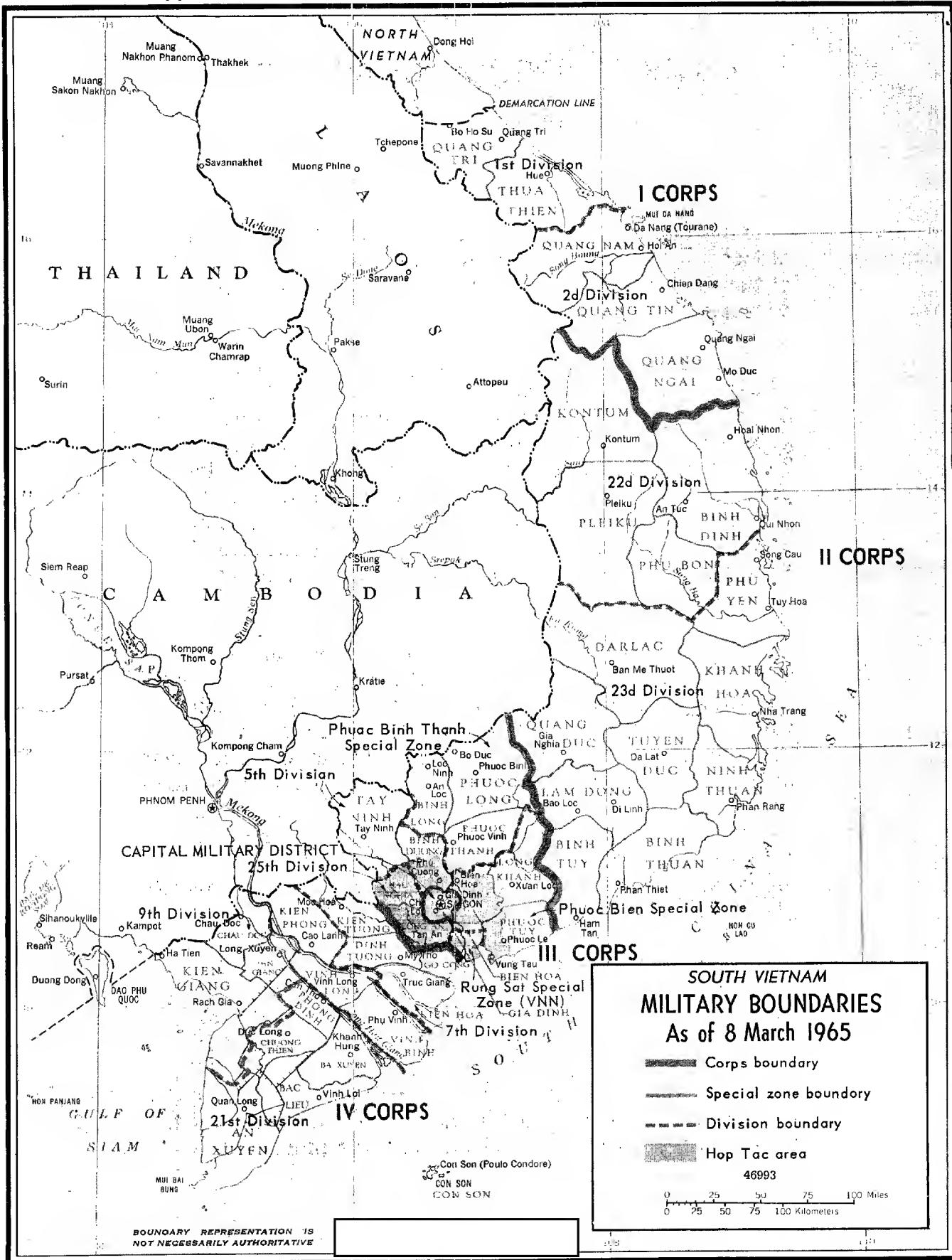
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*Vietnam: (Information as of 2400 EST, 18 April) Moscow may be setting the stage for an announcement of the dispatch of Soviet military personnel to North Vietnam.

Although cautious and contingent, the Soviet pledge to send volunteers to the DRV, contained in the joint Soviet - North Vietnamese communiqué of 17 April, goes well beyond Brezhnev's ambiguous reference on 23 March to the readiness of Soviet citizens "to take part in" the DRV's defense. The 17 April pledge of personnel makes their dispatch contingent both upon an intensification of US military action against North Vietnam, and upon a request for Soviet volunteers from Hanoi.

There is still no firm evidence of the transit or arrival in the DRV of Soviet military equipment or personnel. [Preliminary field analysis of 17 April photography, however, indicates continuing progress in the construction of the surface-to-air missile site southeast of Hanoi. This installation was first detected in photography of 5 April. According to analysis of the latest photography, four of the six launch positions now appear to be completed. Work on the revetted central guidance facility also appears complete, but the perimeter roads are still under construction.]

Following Soviet Premier Kosygin's visit to the DRV in early February, both governments asserted that "regular consultations" would be held on "measures which should be taken to strengthen" North Vietnamese military capabilities. The joint Soviet-DRV talks in Moscow which preceded the 17 April communiqué are the first to be publicized since Kosygin's visit. The secrecy which surrounded the talks prior to the

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communiqué suggests that neither government was sure at the outset whether the discussions would be successful.

The communiqué contained the most authoritative public Soviet references to President Johnson's 7 April speech yet noted. While critical of the speech, the communiqué avoided the vitriolic, personal criticism of the President which appeared in earlier assessments of the speech from Hanoi and Peiping.

The communiqué stated that it would be "useful to convene the relevant international conferences" to solve the problems of Laos and Cambodia. It thus followed up on the 8 April Soviet proposal for an immediate international conference on Cambodia. Hanoi and Peiping had already publicly endorsed the Cambodian appeal of 15 March for a conference.

In other political developments, the Asian Communists continued their efforts to line up greater Afro-Asian support on Vietnam. Over the week end, North Vietnamese and Chinese Communist delegates at the Bandung anniversary celebrations in Djakarta held a series of meetings with Sukarno, Sihanouk and several of the African leaders present for the anniversary. Hanoi and Peiping propaganda indicates that the Vietnam situation figured prominently in these discussions.

A series of Bandung anniversary fetes were also held in China over the week end. Top Peiping leaders used them as an occasion to stress the necessity of Afro-Asian support for the "Vietnamese people's struggle." Their speeches were among the toughest yet given by Chinese officials on the Vietnam situation. They attempted to convey the impression that Peiping is in the vanguard in offering support to the Vietnamese. However, they failed to pledge any specific action. Chinese politburo member Peng Chen, for example, asserted that the Chinese were "willing to take emergency action to force the US aggressors" out of Vietnam. Another politburo member, Teng Hsiao-ping, declared China ready to support the Vietnamese "no matter what happens and regardless of what price we must pay."

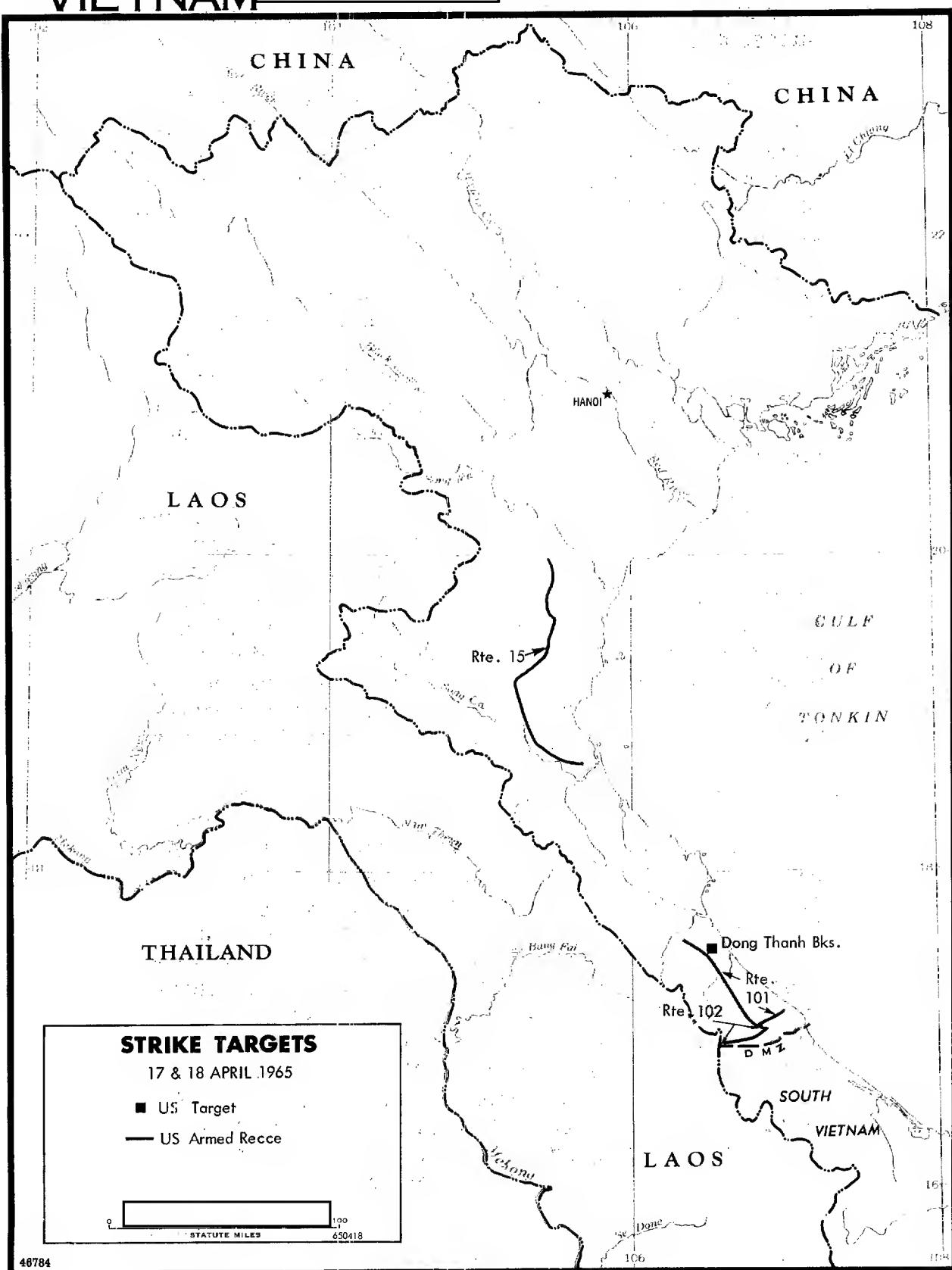
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Both Chinese leaders, however, carefully emphasized that the Vietnamese were at the "forefront" of the fighting.

Full results of the air strikes against North Vietnam on 17 and 18 April are not yet available. According to preliminary information, some damage was inflicted to buildings in Mu Gia Pass on 17 April. A string of 12 boxcars on the rail line between Vinh and Dong Phuong was also attacked on the same day.

Armed road reconnaissance missions conducted along Route 15 from Vinh northward during the evening of 18 April encountered several large truck convoys. Bombing runs were made against an estimated 12 to 20 truck convoy and against another convoy believed to contain 80 to 100 trucks. Heavy antiaircraft fire was encountered during the latter attack. It was believed that portable antiaircraft guns were accompanying the trucks. Damage to the convoys is unknown.

In South Vietnam, the pace of Communist activity remained unchanged with incidents confined mainly to harassments of government posts and hamlets, as well as to limited sabotage against road communications.

Following his tour of South Vietnam's IV Corps in the delta late last week, General Westmoreland reported a marked improvement in the confidence of the three divisional commands and a general improvement in both military and civilian morale. He was also told that more intelligence is being received from the local population, including reports of low Viet Cong morale.

South Vietnam's 7th Division commander told Westmoreland that some Viet Cong units were moving from his area to III Corps, possibly to conduct operations which would force the government to bring its general reserves back to the Saigon area from II Corps, where they have scored several successes against the Viet Cong.

The Buddhist Institute in Saigon is continuing its low-keyed anti-Communist campaign, and has denied exerting any pressure in the recent government suspension of two senior military officers.

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The Under Secretary of State

The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

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